

# A SHORT HISTORY OF THE ROUND TABLE

*In 1909, members of Alfred Milner's Kindergarten regrouped in London to found the Round Table for the purpose of creating an imperial federation covering Britain and all its dominions.*

*Part 3 of 4*

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## THE KINDERGARTEN RETURNS HOME

More than a few researchers have found attractive Quigley's argument that Cecil Rhodes's essential vision for the unity of the English-speaking peoples was a benevolent one. Commenting on the "international Anglophile network" that had grown out of both Rhodes's money and vision of Anglo-American unity, Quigley described as "commendable" this group's "chief aims", including to "maintain the peace" and "help backward, colonial and underdeveloped areas to advance toward stability, law and order, and prosperity..."<sup>86</sup>

Taking his cue from Quigley, one prominent researcher suggested that Rhodes founded the Round Table "possibly with the best of intentions", including "a desire to stop wars", but following Rhodes's death in 1902 "the big switch was made and the Illuminati, in classic fashion, hijacked his creation".<sup>87</sup>

To be sure, Rhodes was interested in world peace; but the Round Table was founded seven years after his untimely death and we cannot forget that in his "Confession" Rhodes dismissed non-British peoples as "despicable". But if we put aside these elementary errors it is worth noting that when the Kindergarten returned to Britain in 1909, it was not Cecil Rhodes's ideas they drew upon but Milner's visions and ambitions. More importantly, as we have already seen in part two, Milner's ideas on imperial federation fell somewhat short of the Anglo-American world government sought by Rhodes.

The Kindergarten received many reminders of Milner's commitment to imperial consolidation and disinterest in expanding the British Empire. Before his return to Britain in 1905, for example, Milner had given a farewell speech on the "great ideal of Imperial Unity" in which he argued for an empire "united *not in an alliance*—for alliances can be made and unmade... *but in a permanent organic union*".<sup>88</sup> In 1904, also in Johannesburg, Milner had declared himself prepared "to see the Federal Council of the Empire sitting in Ottawa, in Sydney, in South Africa—sitting anywhere within the Empire—if in the great future *we can only hold it all together*".<sup>89</sup>

Another influence on the Kindergarten was Frederick Scott Oliver (1864–1934), an American businessman, aspiring politician and author of *Alexander Hamilton: An Essay on American Union* (1906)<sup>90</sup>—a book hailed by leading Round Table members Leo Amery and Lionel Curtis as "the Bible" and "great inspiration" of their movement. According to Nimocks, rather than its being merely a biography of the famed American statesman, Oliver's book "is more accurately described as a five-hundred-page plea for imperial unity". Oliver drew comparisons between Hamilton's push to centralise authority in the North American colonies, and then argued for the British Empire's need to consider a similar course.<sup>91</sup> Like Milner, Oliver was an advocate of imperial consolidation, not further expansion. He also shared a disdain for democracy; in fact, Milner believed Oliver to have "an aversion for Democracy".<sup>92</sup>

## LIONEL CURTIS'S PLAN FOR IMPERIAL UNITY

It was Lionel Curtis, probably the most zealous and idealistic of the Kindergarten members, who took the initiative, devising a step-by-step plan to unify the Empire based on their South African experience. This was perhaps inevitable, as he was the most avid proponent of the Kindergarten's devotion to imperial unity—hence his nickname, "the Prophet". As Amery noted, "His passionate sincerity and energy, as well as the indisputable logic of his arguments, tended to dominate our councils".<sup>93</sup>

Educated at New College, Oxford, and one of the first of Milner's recruits in 1901,

Curtis very much defined all that contemporary critics disliked about Milner's Kindergarten. According to one biography of Curtis, the then young, confident, single-minded Curtis was considered a "flagrant example of precocious Kindergarten cocksureness" (Lavin). Curtis was also the Kindergarten's most enthusiastic advocate of the "organic union" of South Africa, writing its two most important propaganda tracts, *The Selborne Memorandum* (1907) and *The Government of South Africa* (1908). He possessed an unbounded zeal for extending the project of "organic union" not only to the British Empire but also to the world.<sup>94</sup> Curtis sought the support of Milner and The Rhodes Trust both to refine the plan further and bring it to fruition.

After returning to Britain in 1905, Milner turned to various other pursuits. Despite his socialist orientation, he refused a government pension and instead sought employment in the City, London's financial district, subsequently joining the boards of the London Joint Stock Bank, the Bank of West Africa and the Rio Tinto Company. He also continued his work with The Rhodes Trust, becoming its "most active member" according to Marlowe. At the same time, Milner renewed his acquaintance with Sidney and Beatrice Webb, founders of the Fabian Society. It was an odd relationship. Milner viewed his controversial departure from South Africa as proof that events were moving their way, while his "house of cards" was "tumbling down". Beatrice Webb in turn pitied Milner, thinking of him as "bitter and obsessed" and lacking in spirituality; only "God and a wife", she believed, would turn him into a "great man".<sup>95</sup>

Milner also maintained his political interests, joining two dining clubs devoted to his pet concerns of imperial unity and tariff reform: the "Coefficients" and the "Compatriots". Founded by Sidney Webb in 1902, the Coefficients met monthly to discuss defence, imperial issues and the economy. The Compatriots, which concerned itself with tariff reform and imperial unity, was established by Leo Amery, a journalist who had associated with Milner and the Kindergarten while working as a correspondent for the *Times* during the Boer War and who, after the Kindergarten's return to Britain, was employed by Milner as one of his assistants. Milner provided funding to these groups and other activities out of The Rhodes Trust.

Quigley characterised the Compatriots and Coefficients as some of the "numerous groups and organizations founded by Milner...to create an immense nexus of influence and patronage for directing public policy in imperial and other matters".<sup>96</sup> This is an odd claim, given that Milner abandoned the Coefficients on the grounds that it was too divisive and then the Compatriots, once it was superseded by a more enduring creation—the Round Table.<sup>97</sup> There was no network—at that stage. Instead, with the return of the Kindergarten in 1909 and the appearance of Curtis's plan, Milner was suddenly seized with a desire to establish a more substantial movement for imperial federation, telling Amery of his newfound enthusiasm for creating a "single Imperial Unionist party all over the Empire".<sup>98</sup>

During July and August 1909, Milner, Amery, Curtis, Oliver and other members of the Kindergarten, plus a host of other British establishment figures who were taken by Milner's vision

of imperial federation, met in a number of exclusive London clubs to discuss Curtis's plan. Curtis's scheme had three essential components:

1) to produce a memorandum, similar to *The Selborne Memorandum*, which would define the "imperial problem" as a basis for discussion;

2) to contact influential supporters of imperial federation throughout the Empire, especially in the press and parliaments, using the memorandum as a talking point, to establish a political organisation to promote the cause;

3) to publish magazines and other periodicals throughout the Empire that would carry the message of imperial unity, but under central supervision to ensure the message remained consistent.

As for the preferred model of imperial unity, according to Curtis biographer Deborah Lavin he proposed establishing "a central sovereign imperial authority directly elected by the people of the Empire to conduct foreign policy and control the armed services, raising taxation through its own officers".<sup>99</sup>

### CONFERENCE AT PLAS NEWYDD

In September 1909, Curtis's proposals to create an organisation to influence elite opinion in the cause of imperial federation were debated at the estate of Lord Anglesey at Plas Newydd in Wales.

In retrospect, the Plas Newydd conference became the model for other elite policy-planning groups in the 20th century—a model copied faithfully, if unwittingly, by the founders of the Trilateral Commission, the Bilderbergers, the Club of Rome and the World Economic Forum—with the power-elite gathering in exclusive and isolated locations for private conferences on grand geopolitical schemes.

Thus at Lord Anglesey's well-appointed estate (it even had a golf course and a cricket pavilion), with Milner leading the proceedings, the gathered supporters of imperial federation discussed the plans further. Curtis's blueprints for the propaganda methods of the organisation underwent little modification, and the immediate production of a memorandum on "imperial problems" was endorsed. That the British Empire must unite or disintegrate was accepted as a self-evident truth; however, the options of voluntary associations or alliances between Britain and its dominions were rejected as unstable and unsuitable alternatives to unity. As recorded by Philip Kerr (later Lord Lothian; 1882–1940), "it was thought that in the long run some form of organic union was the only alternative to disruption". Funding for the movement was also discussed, and was obtained from a number of benefactors including South African mining magnate Sir Abe Bailey and The Rhodes Trust. According to Quigley, The Rhodes Trust was to provide almost £24,000 to the Round Table in its first decade.<sup>100</sup>

At a subsequent meeting, held on 23 January 1910 in Milner's offices in Manchester Square, "organic union" of the British Empire was formalised as the ultimate aim of the Round Table movement. According to a memorandum of the meeting, this required the "establishment of an Imperial Government constitutionally responsible to all electors of the Empire and with power to act directly on the individual citizens". The plan was to

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establish an organisation or "moot" (an old English word for "meeting" or "assembly"), headquartered in England and with other branches throughout the empire, to discuss, debate and, it was hoped, bring to fruition the goal of "Imperial Union". In addition, a decision was made to publish a quarterly journal, *The Round Table*, as the movement's propaganda organ. It was at that point that Milner and his supporters "finally took the plunge and resolved to launch a political movement" (Watt). The movement quickly spread, with numerous Round Table groups made up of local "men of influence" forming in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and India.<sup>101</sup>

This moment also marked the realisation of Rhodes's dream of an empire-spanning political network supporting imperial federation. With Round Table groups spread across the British Empire, and its members located in parliaments and the press—including Geoffrey Dawson as editor of the *Times* newspaper—the essential elements of Rhodes's original plan seemed in place. Could it succeed?

### PROPAGANDA MESSAGE: "IMPERIAL PROBLEMS"

The Round Table founders hoped to achieve the "organic unity" of the British Empire, but in pursuing this goal they were motivated by three concerns. The first was their growing realisation that Britain was in decline; its ability to project power worldwide was beginning to ebb away. Milner, for example, in the introduction to a collection of his speeches published in 1913, warned that even though Britain was providing "peace and order" and "civilised conditions" for "2/5ths of the human race", "[s]ooner or later the burden must become too heavy for the unaided strength of that portion of the race which...dwells in the United Kingdom".<sup>102</sup> Second, it was maintained that the British Empire in its current form was quite inadequate to the task of providing for the defence of all the dominions and colonies.

Related to this was the third factor—and according to Quigley, one of the "dominant considerations" behind the founding of the Round Table—which was "the fear of Germany, and federation was but one possible way of strengthening imperial defence".<sup>103</sup>

Amery had best expressed these combined fears in a political speech in 1906, in which he also named the United States as one of Britain's new rivals:

*Every year the competition for power among the great world states is getting keener, and unless we can continue to hold our own...we shall be starved out, invaded, trampled under foot and utterly ruined. But how can these little islands hold their own against such great and rich Empires as the United States and Germany are becoming...? How can we...compete against states nearly double our size?*<sup>104</sup>

Believing the British establishment was not sufficiently aware of this reality, the Round Table sought to ensure that warnings of Britain's inadequate defences and the growing threat from Germany formed an integral part of the propaganda efforts. These messages were subsequently incorporated into a two-stage

program. In the first part, the litany of "imperial problems" was to be given widespread exposure, while in the second, once the message of a weakened and vulnerable British Empire had sunk in, imperial union or federation was to be presented as the obvious and *only* solution.

The primary means by which their propaganda message was transmitted was through their journal *The Round Table*. As historian Walter Nimocks wrote in his study of the movement, this publication was noteworthy for the "remarkable consistency" in the content of its articles. This was because nothing the Round Table intended for public distribution was released without having been reviewed and debated at the moots and then revised to reflect the consensus position. Issues which eluded agreement, such as trade, were left out. This is clearly evident in the first four years of publication, where:

*The reader was constantly reminded of deficiencies in imperial administration which imperilled the future of the Empire. The irrational organization of the British parliament, the ineffectual nature of Imperial Conferences, and the injustice over the system which gave to Britain war-or-peace authority over supposedly self-governing nations were frequently examined... [and] the whole body of Milnerian criticism, and usually the Milnerian solution, was offered.*<sup>105</sup>

In the first issue of *The Round Table* (November 1910), for example, all these themes, including the threat from Germany, were explored. The preface, written by editor Philip Kerr, introduced the new journal with the observation that "times are changing... [and] the methods of yesterday will not serve in the competition of tomorrow". Noting the possibility of "conflict" between Britain and Germany and that there was "no means of marshalling the whole strength and resources of the Empire effectively behind its will", Kerr hinted that there should be "some other means" whereby Britain and the dominions could quickly make the

required decision.<sup>106</sup>

Another article in the same issue, also by Kerr, titled "Foreign Affairs: Anglo-German Rivalry", asserted that "the central fact in the international situation today is the antagonism between England and Germany... [and] the solution of this rivalry...is the most difficult problem which the [British] Empire has to face". Kerr characterised Germany as inherently aggressive and expansionist, as it was dominated by Bismarck's approach to world affairs: the relentless use of power. The growth of the German Navy meant that Britain could no longer protect the dominions. Moreover, Britain could not hope to rely upon an alliance with the other European powers, France and Russia; nor could it anticipate that an outbreak of "true democracy" would overthrow Germany's existing regime, curtailing its push for "world domination". There was only "one policy" left: that of shoring up British power to the extent that it would become "impossible for Germany to achieve her ambitions except by force". The logic was simple: Britain could no longer protect its empire under existing defence arrangements.<sup>107</sup>

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## THE SOLUTION: IMPERIAL FEDERATION

The preferred solution to this dilemma was conveniently explained in the May 1911 issue of *The Round Table* on the eve of that year's Imperial Conference:

*The conclusion is inexorable. Either the nations of the Empire must agree to cooperate for foreign policy and defence, or they must agree to dissolve the Empire and each assume the responsibility for its own policy and its own defence... There is no third alternative. The present system cannot continue.*<sup>108</sup>

This is, however, the high watermark of what the movement was prepared to reveal of its ultimate goals, at least in the early years. Most Round Table members agreed that advocating imperial federation too soon could prove unpopular. These fears were soon proved justified at the 1911 Imperial Conference, when the New Zealand prime minister, Sir Joseph Ward, proposed forming a permanent "Imperial Council of State" consisting of representatives from all the dominions. The British and Canadian prime ministers rejected his proposal outright, causing Milner to despair that the conference outcome had been "calculated to dishearten Imperialists everywhere". Opponents of the proposal were somewhat more joyous. "We have destroyed root and branch the proposal for an Imperial Council of State or Parliament", as South Africa's new prime minister, Louis Botha, cheerfully reported home.<sup>109</sup> Within the Round Table, dismay and anger abounded as suspicions grew that Curtis, who had coincidentally visited the New Zealand prime minister just before the conference, must have encouraged Sir Joseph to make his statement. The accusation was perhaps unfounded, yet it demonstrated their fear that Curtis's zeal for federation was such that he would recklessly disregard his own propaganda plan.

The other reason for the Round Table's reluctance to provide a detailed solution in its first few years is that its consensus position on imperial federation had yet to be finalised. The movement's hope was that it would soon have its own equivalent of the Kindergarten's *Selborne Memorandum* from which, in the words of one Round Table member, the "conspiracy would become the crusade".<sup>110</sup> Yet the ensuing process of developing this model would not be smooth, revealing not only the growing divisions

among these self-appointed crusaders for imperial federation but their failure to foresee the impending failure of their grand scheme.

## THE "GREEN MEMORANDUM"

The task of devising an acceptable model of imperial federation fell to Lionel Curtis. Immediately after Plas Newydd, Curtis was dispatched to Canada on a fact-finding mission on dominion nationalism. The report of his trip, the *Green Memorandum* (1910), followed a standard pattern. It identified the growing danger to the British Empire posed by a militant Germany, and then, after dispensing with other proposed remedies including "Imperial Cooperation", it launched into Curtis's preferred solution of "organic union".

Curtis called for the creation of an "Imperial Government" that would have absolute and unfettered control over all Empire defence and foreign policy matters. It would have the power to raise taxes, and there would be an "Imperial Federal Parliament" with two chambers to make necessary legislation.

Britain and the dominions would retain some powers, including setting tariffs, but would still be beholden to the imperial government on other matters. It was an ambitious document but one that seemed to cause more problems than it purported to resolve, spurring a long debate within the movement over the means

and ends, which would overwhelm even Curtis's "mesmeric hold" (Rose) over his associates.<sup>111</sup>

According to Quigley, the Round Table "pretended to represent diverse opinions when as a matter of fact it insisted on unanimity...and eliminated diverse points of view very quickly".<sup>112</sup> The inaccuracy and illogic of Quigley's charge become evident when we consider the scope and vehemence of the Round Table's internal disagreements. In fact, the façade was the Round Table's *outward* image of ideological unity, maintained through the anonymous articles in *The Round Table*—a practice that merely hid the diversity of views and bitter debates within.

These divisions were most evident in Curtis's stormy relationships with his peers, his grandiose schemes on imperial unity leading to frequent clashes with Milner and Amery. While

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### Endnotes

86. Carroll Quigley, *Tragedy and Hope: A History of the World in Our Time*, Angriff Press, 1974, pp. 950, 954.

87. David Icke, *The Robots' Rebellion: The Story of the Spiritual Renaissance*, Gateway Books, 1994, p. 154.

88. Quoted in Walter Nimocks, *Milner's Young Men: the "Kindergarten" in Edwardian Imperial Affairs*, Duke University Press, 1968, p. 130 (emphasis in original).

89. Quoted in George Louis Beer, "Lord Milner and British Imperialism", *Political Science Quarterly*, June 1915, p. 306 (emphasis added).

90. See Frederick Scott Oliver, *Alexander Hamilton: An Essay on American Union*, MacMillan & Co, 1906.

91. Nimocks, *Milner's Young Men*, pp. 127, 129 (Amery and Curtis quotes).

92. Quoted in A.M. Gollin, *Proconsul in Politics: A Study of Lord Milner in Opposition and in Power*, Anthony Blond, 1964, p. 314.

93. Quoted in Wm Roger Louis, *In The Name Of God, Go! Leo Amery and the British Empire in the Age of Churchill*, W.W. Norton & Co., 1992, p. 42.

94. John E. Kendle, *The Round Table Movement and Imperial Union*,

University of Toronto Press, 1975, pp. 16, 20, 57; Deborah Lavin, *From Empire to International Commonwealth: A Biography of Lionel Curtis*, Clarendon Press, 1995, p. 36; and Norman Rose, *The Cliveden Set: Portrait of an Exclusive Fraternity*, Pimlico, 2000, pp. 59-63.

95. Quoted in John Marlowe, *Milner: Apostle of Empire*, Hamish Hamilton, 1976, pp. 176-179.

96. Carroll Quigley, "The Round Table Groups in Canada", *Canadian Historical Review*, September 1962, p. 204.

97. Nimocks, *Milner's Young Men*, pp. 145-146; Marlowe, *Milner: Apostle of*

Curtis put his faith in a political solution, Milner and Amery both believed that economic unity was the key to establishing an imperial federation. For Milner, this meant complete free trade amongst its members but with a common tariff against the rest of the world that would bind Britain and its dominions more closely together.

Amery took a similar view, believing that economic solidarity would form the bedrock upon which a federal structure could then be placed. Closer economic union, he maintained, was the "master key of the whole problem". Milner also found fault with Curtis's idea of an imperial parliament, preferring full partnership for the dominions rather than their remaining permanently subservient to London.<sup>113</sup>

These were important criticisms. However, Curtis had a number of personality faults, including a dogmatic indifference to inconvenient facts—such as the growing desire of the dominions for independence—and an inability to assimilate contrary opinions. Subsequently his later works, in particular the three-volume *Project of the Commonwealth*, parts of which were published as *The Commonwealth of Nations* (1916) and *The Problem of the Commonwealth* (1916), again endorsed the construction of an organic union through a radical constitutional overhaul in Britain and the dominions and the establishment of a new supranational level of government.<sup>114</sup>

In *The Problem of the Commonwealth*, for example, Curtis argued that the "problem of government" in the British Empire would "lead to certain and world-wide disaster unless corrected". Curtis's solution was to create a "Commonwealth Cabinet"—ultimately responsible to a "Commonwealth Parliament"—that would "control defence, foreign policy and the decision of peace or war, and have the power to raise revenues for imperial purposes".<sup>115</sup> For Curtis, there was only one alternative to "organic union": the dismantling of the British Empire. However, despite Curtis's intentions, his incendiary proposals in *Commonwealth* came close to splitting the Round Table and eroded support for imperial federation in the dominions.

Within the movement, Leo Amery opposed Curtis's proposals, arguing that it would be "constitutional hari-kari" [*sic*] to sacrifice the British system of government in order to establish an imperial union based on the US federal system. He also regarded as an illusion, if not a delusion, Curtis's belief that the political federation of the British Empire would inevitably lead to a "world-state".<sup>116</sup>

## THE MOVEMENT FAILS

The internal bickering over the sensibility or otherwise of Curtis's increasingly utopian proposals for imperial federation were to prove of marginal concern in the long run. The fundamental issue of whether the dominions would support any proposal for imperial federation or "organic union" was neglected.

In particular for Curtis, who conducted numerous trips to local chapters of the Round Table in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa, it was inconceivable that the dominions would reject imperial federation. Yet for all his journeys, Curtis failed to see that the Round Table groups were hardly representative of dominion opinion.

As one New Zealand historian later observed, "In all the colonies the Imperial Federation movement seems to have been a stuffed shirt affair". Most of the imperial federation supporters in the dominions, especially the politicians, had their own expedient interpretations of the concept,

which they were quick to modify.

Moreover, they all operated in an environment of growing nationalism, which caused many of them to dispense with the federal idea once its popularity declined.<sup>117</sup>

What was invisible to Curtis had long been obvious to Round Table editor Kerr, who harboured growing misgivings about the entire project.

Following his journey to Canada with Curtis in 1909, Kerr wrote to fellow member Robert Brand expressing his doubts about the whole enterprise, including his feeling that forcing the federal solution on the dominions might only hasten their desire for independence:

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*Empire*, pp. 176, 179.

98. Nimocks, *ibid.*, pp. 133, 146; Milner quoted in Gollin, *Proconsul in Politics*, p. 163.

99. Nimocks, *ibid.*, pp. 134-136, 147-148; Lavin, *From Empire to International Commonwealth*, p. 108.

100. Nimocks, *ibid.*, pp. 148-151 (including Kerr quote); Kendle, *The Round Table Movement*, pp. 63-64; Lavin, *ibid.*, pp. 108-109; Quigley, "The Round Table", pp. 210-211.

101. Kendle, *ibid.*, pp. 70-71; David Watt, "The Foundation of the Round Table", *The Round Table*, November 1970, p. 425 (including quote from

memorandum); and Rose, *The Cliveden Set*, p. 88.

102. Quoted in Marlowe, *Milner: Apostle of Empire*, p. 201.

103. Quigley, "The Round Table", p. 219.

104. Quoted in Louis, *In The Name Of God, Go!*, pp. 53-54 (emphasis added).

105. Nimocks, *Milner's Young Men*, p. 190.

106. Quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 188-189.

107. Kerr quoted in Kendle, *The Round Table Movement*, pp. 108-110; and Rose, *The Cliveden Set*, p. 56.

108. Quoted in Kendle, *ibid.*, p. 111.

109. Milner quoted in *ibid.*, p. 114;

Botha quoted in Rose, *The Cliveden Set*, p. 67.

110. Anonymous quote in Marlowe, *Milner: Apostle of Empire*, p. 212.

111. Kendle, *The Round Table Movement*, pp. 74-80; Rose, *The Cliveden Set*, p. 66.

112. Quigley, "The Round Table", p. 218.

113. Marlowe, *Milner: Apostle of Empire*, pp. 183, 214; Louis, *In The Name Of God, Go!*, pp. 37, 42-43.

114. See Lionel Curtis, *The Commonwealth of Nations*, MacMillan

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Lionel [Curtis] believes that the only hope for the Empire lies in "organic unity"... I think, now, that organic unity of that kind is impossible at any rate until science has revolutionised communication and transportation, and that to try to bring on a movement of that kind would be almost certain to break up the Empire... If you forced Canada to choose now between imperial federation and independence, I think she would take independence.<sup>118</sup>

Kerr's analysis of the inherent reluctance of the dominions to forgo the possibility of independence would soon prove quite accurate.<sup>119</sup>

Why he stayed on as *Round Table* editor, despite harbouring these doubts, is another matter. One explanation offered is that Kerr's "devotion to Curtis and his other friends" caused him to suppress his doubts.

For Kerr, this was to be an unsuccessful venture and is the most likely cause of his nervous breakdown in 1912, leading to his withdrawal as *Round Table* editor for nearly two years.<sup>120</sup>

During the First World War, though, it became apparent to other *Round Table* members that Kerr had been right. At a conference sponsored by the Empire Parliamentary Association in 1916, for example, Milner outlined the *Round Table's* project for imperial federation, making many references to Curtis's works, "but found that not one Dominion member present would accept it" (Quigley).

The dominions' real preference was made clear to all at the Imperial Defence Conference of 1917, at which South Africa's minister for defence, Jan Smuts, drafted a resolution calling for "full recognition of the Dominions as autonomous nations in the Imperial Commonwealth".

It was in response to this growing evidence of dominion nationalism, according to Quigley, that the goal of imperial federation was "replaced or postponed in favour of the commonwealth project of free cooperation".<sup>121</sup>

The collapse of the *Round Table's* crusade for imperial federation became apparent at the imperial conferences of 1921, 1923 and 1926. The dominions (Canada, Australia, South Africa and

New Zealand) decisively rejected the model of imperial federation, in particular the calls for a constitutional conference that had arisen at the 1917 conference.

The final blow came with the Balfour Declaration of 1926 (not to be confused with the first Balfour Declaration of 1917 that paved the way for the founding of Israel), which finally defined the role of the dominions including their "equality" of status,

"autonomy" in external and internal affairs, "common allegiance" to the Crown and "free association" within the Commonwealth.<sup>122</sup>

If the first Balfour Declaration can be said to have led to the creation of one state, the second such declaration bearing that name effectively marked the beginning of the end of the British Empire, converting it into a Commonwealth based on the free association of its member states.

On 11 December 1931, the declaration was enforced when the British Parliament passed the Statute of Westminster, which established the "legislative independence of the dominions". It also "solemnised the renunciation by England" of its "imperial mission" (Kelly).<sup>123</sup>

With that, the cause of imperial federation was dead in the water and the ineffectiveness of the *Round Table's* attempts to decisively mould elite opinion revealed.

*Part Four examines the Round Table's input into the League of Nations, and examines its legacy through to the present day.*

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& Co., 1916; and Curtis, *The Problem of the Commonwealth*, MacMillan & Co., 1916.

115. Curtis quoted in Kendle, *The Round Table Movement*, pp. 179-180, 185-186; and Lavin, *From Empire to International Commonwealth*, pp. 111-112, 128-129.

116. Amery quoted in Louis, *In The Name Of God, Go!*, pp. 42, 37.

117. J.D.B. Miller, "The Utopia of Imperial Federation", *Political Studies*, vol. IV (1956), p. 196, quoting Keith Sinclair's monograph, *Imperial*

*Federation: A Study of New Zealand Policy and Opinion*, Athlone Press, 1955.

118. Quoted in Watt, "The Foundation of the Round Table", p. 431.

119. One might also note Philip Kerr's quite prophetic words on the importance of technological change to making the dream of a truly unified global political entity possible. As related with some enthusiasm in books such as Thomas Friedman's *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (HarperCollins, 2000), recent rapid technological advances in communications and transportation have been the main physical drivers in the current era

of globalisation. The main political drivers have been the globalist elites.

120. Watt, "The Foundation of the Round Table", p. 432.

121. Quigley, *Tragedy and Hope*, p. 147; Smuts quoted in Rose, *The Cliveden Set*, p. 99.

122. Lavin, *From Empire to International Commonwealth*, p. 131; W.D. McIntyre, *Colonies into Commonwealth*, Blandford Press, 1968, 2nd ed., pp. 139-141; Kendle, *The Round Table Movement*, p. 272.

123. Paul Kelly, "Child of Empire", *The Weekend Australian*, 10–11 March 2001, p. 23.